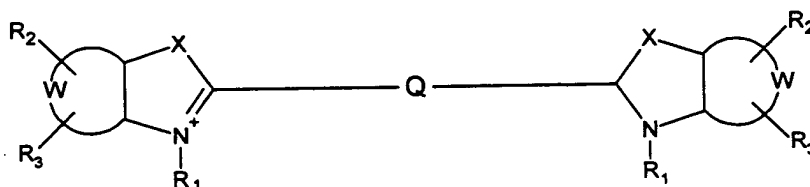


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ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

A symmetric cyanine of the formula:



(1)

wherein:

X is selected from the group consisting of O, S and C(CH₃)₂;

W represents non-metal atoms required to form a benzo-condensed or a naphtho-condensed ring;

R₁ is selected from the group consisting of (CH₂)_nCH₃, (CH₂)_nSO₃⁻ and (CH₂)_nSO₃H, wherein n is an integer selected from 0 to 6 when R₁ is (CH₂)_nCH₃, and n is an integer selected from 3 to 6 when R₁ is (CH₂)_nSO₃⁻ or (CH₂)_nSO₃H;

R₂ and R₃ are independently selected from the group consisting of H, a sulphonic moiety and a sulphonate moiety and

Q is a substituted polymethine bridge.

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